

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240
<http://www.blm.gov>
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In Reply Refer To:
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EMS TRANSMISSION 06/07/2007
Instruction Memorandum No. 2007-131
Expires: 09/30/2008

To: All BLM Employees

From: Director

Subject: Membership and Participation in Professional Organizations, Associations, and Societies

Program Area: All program areas.

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides direction for appropriate employee participation in professional organizations, associations and societies.

Policy/Action: Managers shall encourage (e.g., through new employee orientation) professional affiliation and membership in applicable professional organizations. Furthermore, managers shall encourage Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employees to serve in leadership positions, on working groups, and to publish professional papers, as appropriate. The BLM should also invite members of professional organizations to discuss their activities with employees, and to involve professional BLM representatives in outside task groups or steering committees.

Timeframe: Effective upon issuance.

Budget Impact: Individual offices will be responsible for funding any approved travel and labor costs associated with implementation of this IM.

Background: The BLM manages the natural resources of the largest Federal land estate in the nation. To fulfill our mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands, the BLM must maintain a diverse and highly qualified professional workforce. Our employees are our greatest asset in ensuring that our management approaches are based on the best available science and meet professional standards.

With the many resource conservation challenges facing the BLM, it is essential that BLM professionals, regardless of occupation, maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills. Membership and participation in professional organizations is encouraged in order to maintain and enhance our capabilities in professional resource management. Such membership and participation not only helps to develop a knowledge-based workforce but also enables the BLM to accomplish our strategic and programmatic goals. It also helps to develop a higher degree of public confidence and trust in our professional abilities. There are many benefits and opportunities as a member of professional organizations, such as:

- § Networking with other agencies, academia, and private sector professionals;
- § Higher agency visibility and enhanced professional reputation;
- § Continuing education opportunities and exposure to the latest technological developments;
- § Opportunities to pursue and maintain professional certifications and accreditations;
- § Enhanced employee morale, self-esteem, and motivation; and
- § Development of leadership qualities.

Unfortunately, the BLM may not pay individual membership fees for participating employees. Title 5 U.S.C. 5946 prohibits the use of appropriated funds to pay membership fees of an individual employed by the Federal Government in a society or association. The use of appropriated funds to pay for agency or organizational memberships may be allowable in some instances. The Government Employees Training Act (5 U.S.C. 4109(b)) provides an exception for paying the membership fees when such fees are a necessary cost directly related to essential training or a condition precedent to undergoing training. Title 5 U.S.C. 5757 provides additional guidance on use of appropriated or other funds available to the agency for an employee to obtain professional credentials.

The BLM supports and encourages attendance at appropriate professional organization meetings. Due to budgetary constraints, the BLM may not be able to support travel and attendance fees for everyone who wishes to attend a meeting. Approval to attend non-governmental professional meetings, workshops, or symposia will be on a case-by-case basis with approval by the employee's direct supervisor prior to any obligation of funds. The following criteria are recommended for use in determining attendance at professional organization meetings where employees have paid membership dues and are contributing personal time and money to maintain professional status.

The employee is:

- 1) An official, advisor, committee chairperson, or symposium organizer;
- 2) A presenter of papers, speeches, or instructor as part of the official program;
- 3) Specifically requested to participate to share expertise with attendees;
- 4) Representing the BLM as a spokesperson or carrying out job duties that require interfacing with the organization;
- 5) Seeking to improve job performance, including maintenance of professional certification, through required training at symposia, paper sessions, or continuing education training sessions; or
- 6) Keeping current with the state of the art within his/her profession.

When attendance is approved, the BLM will assist, if funds are available, with travel expenses, attendance or registration fees, and/or duty time for employees while at the event. If attendance at the professional activity is to improve job performance, then a Request for Training, SF-182 Form (Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training) must be completed. When limited funding restricts travel funds, supervisors and managers are encouraged to allow the use of government vehicles

and grant work time for employees willing to cover all or part of their expenses to attend work-related professional meetings and to participate in organization, association, and society activities.

We encourage all employees to further their professional growth by joining and participating in professional organizations, associations, and societies.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: None

Coordination: This IM has been coordinated with the Renewable Resources and Planning (WO-200), Minerals, Realty, and Resource Protection (WO-300), Human Capital Management (WO-700) and Business and Fiscal Resources (WO-800).

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Signed by:
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: Authenticated by
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